DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 957 CS 208 219

AUTHOR McLeod, Alan M., Ed.
TITLE Evaluation and Oral Communication.
INSTITUTION Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 50p.; The Virginia Association of Teachers of English is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Virginia English Bulletin; v34 n1 Spr 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Classroom Communication; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation; *Evaluation Methods; Holistic Evaluation; Language Arts; *Oral Language; Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Speech Communication; Student Research; Teaching Methods; Visual Literacy; *Writing Evaluation; Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; *Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

Articles in this journal issue focus primarily on evaluation in the language arts and oral communication. Following an introduction to the two themes, the articles discuss the following: (1) pop quizzes in literature, (2) holistic scoring, (3) self-evaluation strategies in prewriting and rewriting, (4) what not to do in student/teacher conferences, (5) owning writing, (6) the Virginia Standards of Learning Program for Language Arts assessment procedures, (7) oral communication in the classroom, (8) oral communication and perceived communication, (9) researched speeches, and (10) visual literacy. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED241957

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Evaluation and Oral Communication

VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN

Volume 34, Number 1

Alan M. McLeod, Editor

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Alan M. McLeod

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS208 219

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 1 SPRING 1984

FOCUS: Evaluation and Oral Communication

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Two Stacks Later: Evaluation and Oral Communication 2
ALAN M. MCLEOD (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Evaluation: The Pop Quiz in Literature 3
JAMES D. BLACK (Louisa County High)

Evaluation: The Holistic Scoring Approach 5
BERT CARR (Phoebus High, Hampton)

Evaluation: Prewriting and Rewriting 9
EDGAR THOMPSON and JOHN SWOPE (Virginia Tech)

Evaluation: The Compleat Conference Rulebook 12
STEVEN CULVER (Virginia Tech)

Evaluation: Owning Writing 14
DON WIEST (J.E.B. Stuart High, Fairfax)

Evaluation: Language Arts SOL Assessment Preview 17
DON SALE, SHELLEY LOVING, ANNE ROGERS (Va. Dept. of Education)

Great English Teaching Ideas Column 23
SHARON HARRIS (Albemarle Co. Schools), editor
Bert Carr (Hampton), Outside Reading Assignments 24
Eric Hibbison (JS Reynolds Com. College), Writing Quality 24
Mallory Loehr (Albemarle Co.), Medieval Literature Unit 25
Elizabeth Jordan (Walton Middle, Albemarle Co.), Diary of Anne Frank 25
Mallory Loehr (Albemarle Co.), Readers Theatre 26

Oral Communication: Is Your Classroom Too Quiet? 27
STEVEN FAIRCHILD (James Madison Un.) and Barbara Perry-Sheldon (Harrisonburg)

Oral Communication and Perceived Communication 30
PEPPER WORTHINGTON (Mt. Olive College, NC)

Oral Communication: Researched Speeches 33
ROBERT PERRIN (Indiana State University)

Review: *Guide to Literature for Young Adults* (Cline and McBride) 36
MARK G. GULESIAN (College of William and Mary)

Visual Literacy Comes of Age 37
HILARY TAYLOR HOLBROOK (ERIC/RCS)

The Committee Visits 42
MARSHA OWENS HUBBARD (S. Jackson Jr. High, Hanover Co.)

Analyzing and Evaluating Argument 43
SIMONE POIRIER-BURES (Virginia Tech)

NCTE Task Force on Excellence 45

Search for *Virginia English Bulletin* Editor 48

TWO STACKS LATER: Evaluation and Oral Communication

Alan M. McLeod

Twin themes form the focus for this issue. Both themes receive less attention in the literature than say writing and reading, yet both are attracting increasing recognition and stress. For too long speaking and listening have been relegated to inferior positions as emphasis has centered on reading and writing, a practice that has assumed speaking and listening are so natural students need little formal guidance. We now realize that all the language arts are intricately related, that effective communication involves oral and aural skills as much as visual and kinesthetic ones. Several articles focus on the oral/aural aspects of learning.

Half this issue is devoted to evaluation within the classroom. These articles help point out that evaluation is more than cut and dried pigeonholing. We might do well to think of evaluation and its companion, assessment, in terms of their definitions. Assessment is most often associated with the value placed on property for tax purposes; it also means taking stock of a situation or appraising it. Evaluation is a means of ascertaining value. The synonym for both is *estimate*—to calculate approximately, gauge, form an opinion, judge.

VATE, founded in 1914, is now approximately in its 70th year (technically its 71st) of service to the profession. Later this year there will be a 70th anniversary publication which will look at some significant moments in VATE's history. That special issue, under the editorial direction of Leila Christenbury and an editing committee, will be an estimate. Just as that issue will estimate VATE's accomplishments filtered through the selective eyes of a committee, so standardized tests and other forms of educational evaluation are approximations. They are at best estimates of student ability and accomplishment with respect to selected objectives filtered through the perceptions of vested interest decision-makers. While evaluation results are as necessary as tax assessments—a value calculated arbitrarily and approximately—we must not equate the human mind with property. Our judgments must be drawn within the recognized context of estimates. To treat estimates as absolutes is malfeasance of responsibility. Estimates are not absolutes, evaluations are at best calculated approximations. Let us keep that thought before us and before the community. If we do not, elitism will triumph. Elitism runs counter to what this nation and this Commonwealth have represented. Estimating is valuable as it provides guidance in making decisions intelligently; it is capricious when it leads to arbitrary decisions based on viewing approximations as absolutes.

Evaluation for us is most useful as it informs our instructional efforts. A careful reading of the SOL/LA preview in this issue should reveal Department of Education efforts to help inform our instruction.

Evaluation: The Pop Quiz in Literature

JAMES D. BLACK

I give brief "pop quizzes" to both general and academic English classes. When I began this practice, my goal was to stimulate students to read homework assignments in literature and thus, perhaps, improve class discussion. The quizzes have helped me reach these goals and many more.

When school begins, I announce to my new classes that I give pop quizzes and that my purpose is to reward those who read the assignment. I further state my hope that better reading habits will yield more widespread and meaningful discussion. I am, however, frank about the lowered averages of those who do not read the assignments. Predictably, students at first do not like the idea. Many are unaccustomed to reading homework assignments, and all fear the threat of bad grades. As they become familiar with the system and begin to improve their scores, however, their fears decrease.

The quizzes I use are four questions long, each question answerable with a single sentence. Scoring is quick and easily understood: all four correct yields an A; three, B; two, C; one, D; none, F. I can easily adjust the difficulty to correspond with varying ability levels and to focus on my particular objectives for that lesson.

Suppose the class had as homework the reading of "The Devil and Tom Walker." A fairly easy pop quiz might include questions such as these:

1. *Whom does Tom meet in the woods?*
2. *What is the bargain Tom makes with the stranger?*
3. *What does Tom finally forget to keep always with him?*
4. *What is Tom's fate?*

A pop quiz suitable for a more advanced group might mix the following more difficult questions with a couple of easy ones:

1. *What do the partially-cut trees symbolize?*
2. *Give an example to show that Tom kept his penny-pinching ways even though he was growing rich.*

An even more difficult quiz might include challenging questions such as these:

1. *Give an example of "dramatic irony" from the story.*
2. *What is the significance of the fact that Tom had placed his big Bible beneath a mortgage he was about to foreclose?*

Not infrequently, the first two or three pop quizzes bring disappointing results. However, students do begin to improve their scores by assiduously reading their assignments. Because the grading scale is easy, students see

that mimimal preparation will bring passing grades. In fact, they quickly see that C's, B's, and even A's are within reach, and they read with more focus and intensity.

As they become more practiced, their reading skills and memory actually improve. I then begin to make the quizzes slightly more difficult by replacing one of the easy questions with a more sophisticated one. Grades may slump temporarily, but usually they improve again as students learn what it is they should read for and remember, and how to read on a more sophisticated level.

It is in this area—improved literary skills—that I see the most worthwhile results. Because the students have such immediate and concrete examples of what it is that I consider important, their reading becomes geared to looking for such important facets as plot, character, symbolism, and inferences. Because they regularly practice reading for these elements, they improve their literary skills noticeably.

James Black teaches at Louisa County High School in Mineral.

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO AND THE HUMANITIES INSTITUTE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US

June 24 - July 11 (Edinburgh): Nineteenth-century Scottish Literature and Art
The History of Scotland and Its People

July 15 - August 1 (Cambridge): Shapespeare's Tragedies
Byron, Keats, and Shelley
Modern Fiction

August 5 - August 22 (Cambridge): Shakespeare's Tragedies
Early Victorian Social and Sexual History
Feminine Sensibility and the English Novel:
Jane Austen and George Eliot

August 26 - September 8 (Cambridge): The Architecture, Art, and Poetry of Cambridge

Single, Couple, and Family Accommodations, Field Trips
Fee: $675 - $1,000

Audit or University Undergraduate or Graduate Credit

For Brochure: William R. Mueller, Ph. D.
Director, The Humanities Institute
1108 Bellemore Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21210
Telephone: 301-323-4180

Evaluation: The Holistic Scoring Approach

BERT CARR

Just over four years ago when the local school board, during its annual budget-making process, cut once again the lay reader program, I once more had to cope with the paper load, particularly compositions from advanced placement classes. I searched for a solution and decided to try holistic scoring. As defined by Norman C. Najimy, holistic scoring "is based on the idea that the whole composition is greater than the components, that no components may be judged apart from the whole, and that all components should be judged simultaneously." (*Measure for Measure: A Guidebook for Evaluating Students' Expository Writing:* Urbana, NCTE, 1979). I had heard of the concept from my work in the Eastern Virginia Writing Project, but my knowledge was very limited; so I began reading about this concept. Then I formulated a process which is not only an effective method for evaluation but also a wholesome strategy for instruction. This holistic approach demands attention to the entire instructional context.

The complete process is uncomplicated, but it does necessitate planning and organization, and begins with prewriting activities. The first step is to plan and present clearly an interesting task. I introduce the assignment and discuss the idea of it by reference to familiar incidents, my own experiences, or other related details. I answer questions about any phase of the task and attempt to develop in students a positive attitude towards it. I put a good deal of emphasis on this beginning step. If interest has been aroused and students have a clear understanding of the writing task and the obligations and expectations that go along with it, they very likely will produce an essay of better quality than usual.

Second is the writing of the rough draft. I encourage students to express details freely and rapidly, and to leave off concern about the mechanics of their writing. Next is the revision stage. This step should begin with each student's reading his/her composition. It is indeed good if some volunteers read their writings to the class. Then each student works with a "buddy" or partner who will read the composition and make some worthwhile, constructive comments in writing. The student uses the "buddy" as an advisor as he/she continues the revision process. If time permits, I encourage students to ask for a second or third written opinion from fellow classmates. Dictionaries, copies of a good thesaurus, and some textbooks on usage are on hand for students to use as they write and revise. Early in the revision stage I introduce the rubric for the particular assignment. During the entirety of this crucial step, I answer questions, read passages, and give advice. The more corrections made here, the fewer the mistakes to be addressed after final evaluation. Learning by experiencing occurs. Many students also gain new pride in their writing.

After the revision I ask students to reread their compositions, aloud

if it is possible. This reading is followed by preparing the final draft and proofreading it.

The next step is my reading and scoring of each paper according to the rubric for the particular assignment. I use a simple scoring of one (high) to five (low). The scale may be used in reverse (five-highest and one-lowest). I then transfer the scores into grades (A-high and F-low) for the purpose of record keeping. While I read and score the papers, I prepare a list of common errors and weaknesses for the set of compositions, which I call a "critique." I do not make any marks on the papers.

The final step is returning the scored papers with appropriate scores/grades. I make brief comments, as positive as I can make them, as I return the papers. I once again refer the students to the rubric for the assignment, and then show them the critique as I answer questions and make suggestions. Then the students add the papers to their composition folders to become records of their progress and achievement.

I would like now to discuss more specifically the rubric and its application. First, I define a rubric as a list of specific expectations for a single assignment. A rubric, therefore, can be made quite simple (for low ability levels) or demanding and thorough (for capable students). Its points must be clear to both the students and the teacher. It is also essential that students have ready access to the rubric. They need to know on what specific points they will be scored (graded); and, when the papers are returned, they are obligated to determine according to the list of expectations, or rubric, where their compositions are on the scale of one to five. The rubric, then, is an essential aspect of each writing assignment.

In using the holistic scoring approach I have not encountered any real disadvantages. Two questions may arise, which can be dealt with sensibly and adequately. First is the student's question, "How do I know what is wrong?" I deal with this by explaining that holistic scoring emphasizes how much a student has "gotten right" according to the rubric. I further explain that a student is obligated to study the rubric (I put it on a transparency) and see his/her score for himself/herself. Finally, when I return a set of papers, I always agree to read a paper again and to mark it according to traditional methods if a student is not clear about his/her score.

The second question is "How do you explain to parents a grade when a paper doesn't have a mark on it?" To answer this, I explain that in my conference with parents we examine the student's composition folder with the scored paper, the rubric for the assignment, and the critique for the class. Here it is obvious that parents can understand the relationship of the three specific items much better than they can the defensive attitude that "It's my word against yours."

The holistic approach has several advantages:

- *It is positive.* I read from the perspective of how well the student has produced according to the rubric.

- *It is less monotonous and less time-consuming than grading.* I can approach the "paper work" with a much better attitude because I know I can usually finish a set of papers in approximately an hour.
- *It concerns the whole product.* I don't have to waste time in deciding what percentage will count which value. I view the composition as a finished product that cannot be broken into unrelated pieces.
- *It stresses learning before evaluation.* Students are encouraged to share, to seek answers, and to refine their thoughts before handing in their compositions. I explain that it is too late to correct a mistake after a grade has been given.
- *It points the direction for further learning.* When the papers are returned, students have an opportunity to raise questions. More than this activity, the class critique helps students see points and areas that should be corrected or improved before submitting another paper for scoring. Past rubrics and critiques are maintained for student reference.
- *It permits the teacher to concentrate more on the quality of the ideas which have been expressed.* Here I can lay aside the "red pencil" and read to enjoy and appreciate what the students are sharing with me.

Rubric for Argumentative Essay

SAMPLE—HIGH ABILITY

Focus: Does the essay have an appropriate title?
Is the essay argumentative?
Is the basic argument clearly stated?
Does the essay focus on a particular argument?
Is the argument valid?
Does the essay have appeal?

Development: Are the arguments which are presented logical and supportive?
Are the arguments adequate?
Are they forceful?

Orangization: Does the essay have a proper introduction, followed by a body of supporting arguments, and a forceful conclusion?
Are there adequate transitions?
Are the paragraphs suitable?

Diction: Is the choice of words suitable for argumentative writing?
Is the language clear and specific?

Syntax and usage: Are the sentences complete?
Is the usage correct (verbs, pronouns, in particular)?

Mechanics: Is the spelling generally correct?
Is the punctuation satisfactory?
Is the paper neat with proper margins?
Is there an absence of mark-throughs?
Is capitalization satisfactory?

Rubric for Argumentative Essay

SAMPLE—LOW ABILITY

Is the final copy neat?

Is the title on the top line?
Is the title a good one?

Is the final draft in ink?
Is it written on one side of the paper?

Are the name, class, and date in the upper right hand corner?

Do all the sentences have end punctuation?

Is the spelling generally correct?

Are there enough arguments to make your essay forceful?

Is the essay interesting?

(*Note:* I have intentionally reversed the order of the rubric so that the low ability student will immediately feel that there are points which he/she can handle with ease.)

Here are some notes of caution. The holistic scoring approach does require careful planning. Its concepts and functions must be clearly understood by students, administrators, and parents. Next, its use involves a total process. Just saying, "I'll read these papers and put a grade on them" will not suffice.

I am working with my method of holistic scoring for the fourth year. I have found that I not only have a better attitude toward evaluation but also am doing a better job in instructing students how to write. I have discovered that I have been freed from the constant burden of always having just "one more set of themes to finish."

Bert Carr, president of the BATE affiliate, teaches at Phoebus High in Hampton. He is a Teacher Consultant for the Eastern Virginia Writing Project.

The NCTE Committee to Evaluate Curriculum Guides and Competency Requirements evaluates such materials as a service to schools, identifies exceptional materials for display at the annual convention, and creates a booklet listing annotations for outstanding curriculum materials. School districts wishing to have guides evaluated should send two copies to Jane McClellan, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL. 61801—or write her for additional information.

Evaluation: Self-Evaluation Strategies for Prewriting and Rewriting

EDGAR H. THOMPSON and JOHN W. SWOPE

Often, writing teachers lose sight of the real goal of evaluation: training students to successfully and effectively evaluate their own performance without the constant assistance of teachers. To help move students in this direction, we want to describe two self-questioning strategies that allow students to assess both what is potentially useful in their prewriting and what they must do if they choose to revise.

Teachers do need to intervene while their students are writing to insure that they learn these strategies. These interventions, or writing conferences, need not be of the twenty-minute variety that we use with our college students. For high school teachers, conferences of less than five minutes will suffice because the strategies that we suggest frequently prompt questions that can be answered in a few seconds.

After our students have done some prewriting for an upcoming paper, we ask them to complete the following self-evaluation strategy before coming to us for prewriting conferences. These questions and activities can be duplicated on stencils, displayed on bulletin boards or posters, or written on chalkboards.

1. What ideas did you come up with?
   a. What discoveries did you make?
   b. Which discoveries or ideas jump out at you?
   c. Are any of your discoveries similar? Can you group them?
2. What people, besides your teacher, do you see reading your paper? (For example, a close friend, your classmates, an expert of some kind?)
   a. What do they need to know about your subject?
   b. What do they already know about your subject?
   c. What do they think, feel, or believe about your subject?
   d. What do *you* think, feel, or believe about your subject?
   e. What are differences between your beliefs and your readers'? How might you overcome these differences?
3. Write a purpose statement that includes your name, your reader(s), and your subject. For example, your purpose statement might look like this one: I, John Swope, want to share with my classmates what I saw, heard, smelled, and felt when I saw the movie *Christine*.
4. Now that you know your subject and your readers, what type of paper do you want to do? Do you want to tell a story, argue a point, or entertain? Or do you want to do something else?
5. How will you arrange your ideas in your paper?

The first question in this strategy asks students to evaluate and classify the ideas generated during prewriting. The second question forces them to consider their audience, which students frequently neglect. The last three items direct students to consider structure consciously

in terms of aims and modes. We don't expect students to respond elaborately to the items contained in this prewriting self-evaluation strategy. If students have at least considered them, however, they will have laid the foundation for a productive conference. They will have formulated a tentative solution to the rhetorical problem of the assignment, which can be refined during the actual conference. More importantly, as students continue to use this strategy during subsequent assignments, they gradually internalize it, making it a permanent part of their self-evaluation process.

The items contained in the rewriting self-evaluation strategy look similar to those in the prewriting strategy, but there is an important difference. Before a prewriting conference, students are trying to discover what their intentions are and to articulate them for the first time. Prior to a revision conference, however, the students already have created a text; thus, they need to evaluate what the text does in relation to what they hoped it would. We ask our students to address the following issues before coming to a revision conference:

1. Read through your paper and examine your ideas.
   a. In the left margin beside each paragraph, write the main idea of that paragraph in a word or short phrase.
   b. In the right margin beside each paragraph, list the points that support the main idea of that paragraph.

2. Does the writing achieve the purpose you intended?
   a. If it does, what changes could you still make that might help you better achieve your purpose?
   b. If it doesn't what do you feel is the central idea and its effect on your readers?
      (1) Is this new purpose acceptable to you?
      (2) How will it affect your readers?
      (3) Can you make any changes to make your new purpose better?
      (4) Do you want to rewrite your paper so that it will achieve your original purpose?

3. Have your readers changed since you started?
   a. If not, go directly to question 4.
   b. Do you like your new readers better than your original readers?
   c. What changes do you need to make in your paper that will make it appropriate for your original audience?

4. Will your readers be able to understand clearly what you've written?
   a. What information have you given your readers that they may already know?
   b. What information did you not give them that they may need to understand your paper?

5. Does this writing sound like *you*? (For example, do you preach? Do you apologize for your ideas? Do you speak with authority?)

The first activity in this strategy distracts students from attending to word choice and surface features, which they usually do, and directs them instead to more substantial matters regarding the shape and meaning of their writing. The act of abstracting the meaning of what they've

written into words or phrases, paragraph by paragraph, allows students to see more objectively the sequence and logic, or the lack of it, in their texts. It also forces them to judge the adequacy of their supporting detail. The second activity helps students evaluate whether or not they've actually accomplished what they intended. It also allows them to see whether or not their purpose emerged through the act of writing. This knowledge helps students learn that discovery frequently occurs through writing and that such discovery is not to be dreaded but welcomed. Questions three through five gradually move students to adopt a more critical frame of mind as they read their own work. Students begin to see what their text means from a reader's perspective, thus anticipating problems readers will have with what they've written.

In summary, the prewriting self-evaluation strategy helps students evaluate the mass of ideas created during prewriting, choose a direction, and engage in the creation of a draft. The rewriting self-evaluation strategy affords students the opportunity to disengage from the act of writing, to step back and think about what they've written. Together, these two strategies not only change students' writing but also change the way students view their writing. They no longer make changes just to please the teacher. Instead, they make changes to resolve the dissonance they sense in their own writing. We've found that as our students begin to evaluate their writing in the manner we've just described, they become more independent as writers, thus making our evaluation of them easier.

Herb Thompson and John Swope teach in Virginia Tech's English Department.

NCTE Sponsored Summer Workshops

July 22-26:	The Reading Writing Connection (K-8), led by NCTE President Stephen N. Tchudi, Michigan State University
July 30-August 2:	Teaching Composition in Secondary Schools, led by Dan Kirby, University of Georgia
August 6-9:	NCTE CSSEDC Workshop for Secondary School English Department Chairs, led by Theodore Hipple, University of Florida
August 13-16:	Computers in the Classroom (for secondary school and college teachers), led by Sally Standiford, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The fee for one workshop ($250 before April 15, $300 after April 15) includes room and board. A deposit of $50 is required with application, with the balance of the fee due May 1, 1984. Certificates for three Continuing Education Units will be provided to workshop participants. For registration materials, write Summer Workshops Information, NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Evaluation: The Compleat Conference Rulebook

STEVEN M. CULVER

Student-teacher conferences may be the most productive way of improving student writing and eliminating barriers to communication in the composition classroom. Conferences do require a great amount of time and energy, however, and, especially for the uninitiated, they can be disappointingly ineffective. Here are a few "rules" to help both those who would like to have conferences but haven't and those who have had conferences but have been disappointed in their results.

1. The first rule is to remind students that, when all is said and done, you still have a grade to hang over their heads. This constant reminder will help keep all but the most surly student under some control. Though this approach does not guarantee rapt attention, it will keep students from angrily interrupting you and reduce them to staring vacantly, yet politely, past your shoulder.

2. Be understanding but never empathetic. The latter trait hinders the secure aloofness of the former. Students can sense the difference between the two, but just to make sure, you might begin at least one sentence with "I understand, but. . . ."

3. Impress your students immediately with what you know. Since the knowledge of any bit of trivia is always impressive to a few, dredge up some minutiae for regular use. Tell them, for example, the name of the Skipper character on Gilligan's Island (answer: Jonas Grumby). Such information will win over the selected few who refuse to revel joyously in the nuances of grammar.

4. If students are stupid, tell them so. Most will appreciate your candor, if they understand you. Such up-front frankness can only be good in any relationship because it establishes a strong, honest base to build upon. Caution: see rule 5.

5. Understand that your students are human. They can feel hurt, pain, and anger. This rule is especially good to keep in mind for those students who are bigger than you.

6. To make all your conferences more interesting, be someone different for each one. Play different roles that seem most appropriate to different students. No matter what the role, pontificate at length so your students can see what you are regardless of the way you are acting.

7. Always remember that your main goal is to entertain. Knowledge, given in anything above minimal doses, can destroy the creative juices of your student writers. In-depth study of verbs, for example, will usually play havoc with students' sense of organization.

8. Should a student have more than the average amount of affection and respect for you, rape and plunder at will. Such action, as with any premeditated effort, should be considered from a long-range viewpoint as well as from the perspective of immediate concerns. Ask yourself first: "What grade will I give if the student will cooperate?"

9. Really a corollary to rule 8: only on rare occasions should you come naked to conferences. Though this technique may subdue students by throwing them off-guard, it does present problems when dealing with the other, less progressive faculty.

10. This rule applies to only those who must share their limited office space with one, two, three, or more colleagues. From time to time, your office mate(s) may give information to students in conference which does not seem to be graven upon stone tablets. Feel free to interrupt (preferably as soon as possible after the gaffe) in the student's presence whenever the call of truth strikes.

These simple, easy-to-follow rules should help anyone have carefree, yet educational, conferences. If you still have students who don't profit by these rules, remember that you have that "F" to wield unmercifully (as long as the student won't reappear in another of your classes by virtue of your tough standards).

AN IMPORTANT ADDENDUM: The information provided above is, of course, offered pencil-in-cheek, and it should *not* be applied to students. Teachers should really do the opposite of what is suggested in each of the "rules" in order to have constructive conferences with their writers. Though following them offers some interesting possibilities, this is one good time not to go by the rules.

Steve Culver is in the English Department at Virginia Tech.

1984 ANNUAL VATE CONFERENCE

October 12-14
Airport Sheraton, Roanoke

For Information:
Judy Self, 765 Carson Drive, Christiansburg, VA 24073
or
Jackie Bryant, Virginia Beach City Schools

Evaluation: Owning Writing

DON WIEST

Offering students ownership of their papers does not mean they will take possession of them. Taking possession means work—frustrating, pencil-biting, hand-cramping, emotion-rending, writing work. But more than these problems, taking possession means that students must assume total responsibility for their writing, a new concept to many.

"Just tell me what to do," I heard continuously from my tenth grade students as they attempted to write an essay about short stories they had read and discussed. One side of me wanted to read that rough draft and work my teacher miracle, telling the young writers just what to do at each step of the process. That side lost to the one that answered only specific questions, insisted on the process following its course. They had to write their own theses. They had to find supporting details in their notes and in the text. They had to use their reading/writing groups to get feedback on their papers. They had to use classroom lessons on style and usage in their papers. In order to make the writing more realistic, students tried to decide upon an audience, even if it was just someone other than the teacher/miracle worker. We put papers away for days at a time to get away from them and to clear our thinking. It was during these breaks that we worked on learning those stylistic devices to use in the papers and those usage pitfalls to avoid. So, did it work? Not completely. Was I disappointed? Yes. Ready to quit? *Absolutely not!*

I deal with real human beings who sometimes learn lessons the hard way—in this case by disappointing themselves with less than satisfactory results on their essays. They put a great deal of effort into their papers. They attempted to follow the process that they were learning. What *was* the problem? They had not yet taken possession of their writing. As a result, they followed some of the parts of the process mechanically, not fully understanding their value. When these writers failed to use parts of the writing process, they gave up ownership.

Before writing their final drafts, we negotiated where the points available in the paper would be applied and agreed upon items to be checked:

I. Organization
—Thesis
—Essay development—paragraphs *15*

II. Ideas
—Details
—Attention to reading/writing group suggestions *20*

III. Sentence Structures
—Avoid "to be" verb & "and" where possible
—Use prepositional phrases to add the details
—Use correct subject/verb agreement *10*

IV. Mechanics
—Parts of the process included in order
—Manuscript form
—Spelling *5*

V. Completing the process and handing it in on time *50*

TOTAL *100*

They knew that what really counted was their ideas. I added the fifty points at the end to give them credit for completing the full three week process. So, what happened?

I thought I knew, but I wanted verification. I also wanted to make it clear to them that they must discover their own writing processes and use them. To do this, I asked them to write a friendly letter to themselves in which they addressed their use of notes, thesis, paragraph development and essay form, mechanics, and sentence structures. I had a feeling that they were ready to level with themselves and to make those critical decisions that they had previously avoided as writers.

They said such things in their letters as "If you have notes that you can go back to and use to improve what you have already written, then that could be a good start to an excellent paper." (Linda Schwartzkopf, 6th period) I was amazed. I found myself writing the kinds of comments that I like to write on papers, agreeing with both their identification of problems and with their suggestions to themselves about how to correct the problems. Duc Le, one of my fourth period writers, went so far as to name some very specific items concerning sentence structures, saying, "...You use many forms of the verb "to be" and have many mistakes in subject and verb agreement." I agreed with his observations and those of most of the students because they were starting to deal with their own writing processes. They said things like, "You should have used your notes more than you did. You should try the method that you wrote in your journal (web notes)." (Ajay Joshi, 6th period) Their grades on these letters were much higher than the essay grades. Yes, I graded the assignment. I felt they needed a chance to show what they had learned about their writing processes. More importantly though, their hopes and expectations for the next paper were also much higher. One of my third period writers, Michele Espinoza, summed up a general feeling when she said, "You'll do better next time—I'm sure." In short, they were ready to own their writing, process and all.

So, what did I do? The next day I wrote them the following letter on a large sheet of paper on the front chalkboard while they wrote in their journals.

Class,

I am amazed—pleased! You wrote exactly the kinds of suggestions to yourselves that I would have done, but they're even better because *you* said them. *You* talked about the need for notes. *You* talked about *your* theses. *You* talked about *your own* writing processes.

What you did is the mark of mature writers. Keep it up!

POSTSCRIPT

An important thing happened as I wrote this article. I learned how much natural sense students have when it comes to writing.

After I had completed my second draft of this article, I was stuck. I did not know if it was right. I needed confidence. Something in my mind kept saying that the students deserved a chance to look at what I had written. A month of stalling followed. Then I decided to do it. I asked each of my three tenth grade classes to act as extended reading/writing groups. Choosing one group of four in each class, and letting the others in the classes sit in a ring around our group, I read my article. What happened next I could not believe. They responded to my article with just the comments and questions that I needed to break my mental log jam. I filled three copies of the article with their comments. Never once was my ego bruised. On the contrary, I felt at all times that they wanted to help. They did. Within two days, I had revised and had written my final draft. My students had cleared the jam that had blocked further progress with the article. They had given *me* confidence in myself. I felt proud that they could respond so well to the needs of another writer in their reading/writing groups.

I am left with a deep sense of respect for the natural ability of young writers to provide the response that is needed, thereby helping the writer to progress with confidence.

Don Wiest, a Teacher Consultant for the Northern Virginia Writing Project, teaches at J.E.B. Stuart High in Fairfax County.

Call for Manuscripts

The Winter 1984 VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN (deadline: October 1, 1984) will focus on "Literature and Its Teaching." Manuscripts of approximately 5 or 6 pages doublespaced are especially welcome. Among suitable topics are: works successful with students, rationales, effective strategies, a purpose for teaching literature, what appreciation of literature is, stages of reading development, individual reader identity, controversial pieces, favorite author(s), concepts for units, the relationship of literature to life or the curriculum, appropriate books for children or adolescents.

Consideration will also be given to manuscripts that address the implications for English language arts of recent national commission reports on education; e.g., The Carnegie Commission Report or "A Nation at Risk." Suitable topics include: how the reports will help English language arts instruction, aspects or concerns overlooked by the commissions, language influences perception, where the reports are right (or wrong), how we can make effective use of the reports.

Editor's Note: Awareness and knowledge about the Virginia SOL Program enables teachers to become better acquainted with this mandate. We appreciate the information provided by the Department of Education here. For companion information, we refer you to Kenneth Bradford's column in the February Needle's Eye.

A Preview of Standards of Learning Language Arts Assessment

DONALD S. SALE, SHELLEY L. LOVING, ANNE H. ROGERS

Are you tired of multiple-choice tests? Do percentiles leave you cold? Does a standard deviation strike you as a perversion? If your answer to any of these questions is yes, take heart: first drafts of the assessment procedures for virtually all of the learner objectives of the Virginia Standards of Learning Program for Language Arts (SOL/LA) have now been completed and only a handful include multiple-choice items!

As teachers in most Virginia localities are aware, the SOL Program encompasses all of the major subject areas. The Language Arts portion of the program is scheduled to be ready for full use in the 1984-85 school year by school divisions that elect to participate. The curricular aspect of the program, a set of "learner objectives" similar to but broader than typical "behaviorial objectives," has been incorporated into many local curricula. Beginning next fall, validated procedures for assessing the progress of individual students in attaining each of the learner objectives will be introduced.

The term "assessment procedure," is used instead of "tests" to signal disinterest in traditional paper-and-pencil measures. Traditional test items generally provide only an estimate of the student's skill in regard to an objective. We have tried to ensure that the procedures developed are more direct measures of the skills to be assessed. If an objective calls for the student to write a paragraph, for example, the assessment procedure requires the student to write a paragraph, not choose from a set of paragraphs the one that is written correctly. The assessment procedures developed also differ from traditional standardized paper-and-pencil tests in that they provide a set of guidelines for the teacher to use in assessing student progress on an objective. Sample items are often included in the assessment procedures, but the teacher is not provided with a complete "test" to be administered in a standardized manner. Instead, the teacher is encouraged to adapt the assessment procedures to his/her own curriculum and to incorporate his/her own ideas for assessment.

The Department of Education has attempted to tie assessment and instruction more closely than is generally possible when more traditional tests are used. Most of the assessment procedures developed are direct measures of the skills to be evaluated; assessment may thus be seen as the culmination of the teaching process. For example, in assessing the student's skill in writing a paragraph with a stated main idea sentence, writing a paragraph for assessment is the final step in this instructional unit. This procedure contrasts with more traditional tests where the student's paragraph writing skills might not be assessed until long after instruction has taken place. Unlike the traditional "one-shot," "end-of-the-year" assessment, the Standards of Learning Language Arts procedures are to be used at appropriate intervals throughout the school year.

THE SOL/LA ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE MODEL

The process of developing assessment procedures went through a series of iterations. Several work methods and many modes of presenting the material

were tried. A model which is an integrated approach to amplifying the meaning of the objective, assessing student proficiency in regard to it, and evaluating student performance in a manner which allows for professional discretion was adopted. The three sections of the model are explained below.

I. UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECTIVE

This section, designed to serve as an orientation for the teacher, provides a rationale for why the skills being assessed are important and explains what the objective seeks to accomplish. Further, it delineates the behaviors or knowledge the student must demonstrate to attain the objective. This section helps set the objective in context by noting the skills or knowledge it builds on as well as those for which it is preparatory. In some cases, where the intent of the objective is unclear, it may also include statements which clarify for the teacher which of several possible options is intended.

(We realize that many teachers do not need explanatory statements such as we are providing; our intent is simply to have them there for those who want them.)

UNDERSTANDING THE OBJECTIVE EXAMPLE

6.5 The student will write a paragraph containing a main idea and several supporting details.

While an isolated paragraph is an artificial unit of discourse, learning to write a good paragraph is an important step towards the goal of writing papers which are fully developed and well organized. The paragraph writing process was introduced in the third grade when students wrote a topic sentence and then added sentences. In the fourth grade they added related sentences only. At this level, the process is carried forward with two new expectations. First, the paragraph should be focused. That is, the topic sentence should contain an attitude, opinion, or angle. Second, instead of simply relating in some way, each sentence should have a real, effective function in extending the meaning of the paragraph.

Students who learn to write paragraphs meeting this objective's criteria are learning to sharpen their thinking about a topic and provide support for ideas. Developed here for the purpose of facilitating writing, these skills also prepare students for several upcoming oral communication objectives.

How it relates . . .

As part of a continuing effort to help students learn to develop ideas and express them clearly and according to acceptable form, this objective builds on SOL/LA objectives

2.6 understand the function of a paragraph
3.9 write a paragraph containing a stated main idea
4.7 write a paragraph in which all the sentences are related to one stated topic

and leads to SOL/LA objective

8.8 write coherent paragraphs using effective methods of arranging details.

At grade level, it relates to

5.3 participate in various prewriting activities
6.4 proofread paragraphs written by him/herself. . . .

What the student should know and do . . .

Students write paragraphs which contain

—a topic sentence which limits the topic and conveys an attitude, opinion, or angle
—at least four additional sentences which add to the main idea
—no unrelated or non-contributory sentences.

II. ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

This section includes a brief description of the assessment tasks and specifies under what setting and conditions the assessment should take place. In addition, it provides the teacher with step-by-step instructions to prepare for and carry out the assessment procedure. Finally, in the "Describing student performance" section the teacher is provided with criteria to use in scoring the student's performance. In most cases a sample checklist to be used in conjunction with the criteria is included after the "SUMMARIZING STUDENT PERFORMANCE" section.

ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE EXAMPLE

Students will write at least three paragraphs over a period of six or more weeks. At least two, but preferably all three, will be written in class.

Two other objectives can be assessed using the same paragraphs: 6.3, prewriting, and 6.4, proofreading.

Preparing your students . . .

—Provide instruction in focusing ideas and explaining or extending them.
—Provide practice and feedback in the form of corrected papers over a period of at least six weeks before making the final assessment. Examples of good, merely adequate, and inadequate student papers are especially useful instructional aids. (Be sensitive to students' feelings if you use papers of current students. A better alternative might be to use those of former students—without names, of course.)
—Distribute and discuss the evaluation criteria (see "Describing student performance . . .").

Getting ready yourself . . .

—Develop a list of appropriate topics. Avoid creating topics which are too broad or already have an angle. For example, in order to get a topic sentence such as: "Sometimes I think my dog is smarter than my Dad," consider the following topics:

Too broad:	*Pets*
Too focused:	*How My Dog Is Smarter than My Dad*
Just right:	*Unusual Antics of My Pet*

Always allow students to choose from at least three topics. Add at least one new topic each time you carry out the assessment.

—Prepare and duplicate instructions to the students.

Sample instructions

Today you are to write a paragraph. It must contain a topic sentence and at least four sentences. You may write on any one of the topics below. (If you are re-using topics, for second and third assessments, add

the following: You may write on a topic you have used before, but the paragraph you write today must have different content.)

High School Sports
Rainy Day Activities
My Room at Home

You will have 30 minutes to think about the topic, write the paragraph, and proofread what you have written. Remember that it should be focused and that all sentences should contribute to what you are saying.

Note: Adjust the instructions accordingly if you will be using the paragraph to assess prewriting or proofreading.

—Prepare a checklist on which to record the student's performance (see Sample Checklist).

Conducting the assessment . . .

—Organize any prewriting activities you think appropriate. For example, you might have the whole class brainstorm one of the topics or discuss it in small groups. Or you might have students engage in individual prewriting activities such as reflective thinking and listing.
—Distribute instructions to the students and provide an opportunity for them to answer questions.
—After 30 minutes, collect the papers. If you will be assessing prewriting in addition to the paragraphs, you will need to collect students' notes as well.

Describing student performance . . .

If you will be using these paragraphs to assess proofreading at a later time, do not mark them as you evaluate them for this assessment.
Remember that mechanics and usage are not criteria for this assessment.

1. Did the paragraph contain a topic sentence?
2. Did the topic sentence limit the topic?
3. Did the topic sentence convey an attitude or opinion?
   "I have a pet dog" does not meet this criterion because it is purely factual. "My dog is an interesting pet" does convey an opinion and is an acceptable *topic sentence for this assessment. "Sometimes I think my dog is smarter than my Dad," however, is a* good *topic sentence.*
4. Did at least four other sentences add to the main idea?
   That is, did at least four sentences add to the meaning of the paragraph by explaining or extending the topic sentence. Be alert for sentences which simply restate the topic sentence—or another sentence—in different words. These add nothing. For example, the sentence "He does lots of interesting things" simply repeats the topic sentence "My dog is an interesting pet."
5. Was the paragraph free of unrelated non-contributing sentences?
   "He really likes canned dog food but won't eat dried food" is probably unrelated to "My dog is an interesting pet."

III. SUMMARIZING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

This section contains a series of objective-based statements which summarize the student's knowledge and ability in relation to the objective. They do not compare the student to other students in the class; rather, they summarize his/her performance relative to the overall requirements of the objective. In most cases, this section includes four sets of objective-based descriptive statements which correspond to these general categories.

4 Student's performance went beyond the requirements of the objective.

3 Student's performance demonstrated attainment of the objective. He/she grasped the idea of the objective and his/her performance had only minor errors.

2 Student's performance had major problems. He/she grasped the idea of the objective but did not attain it.

1 Student's performance showed that he/she did not even grasp the idea of the objective.

Insofar as possible, the categories in this section reflect the developmental stages through which most students might be expected to progress in acquiring the knowledge and skill specified. They apply to all procedures except in the few instances where it is not possible for the student to go beyond the requirements of the objective. There only three categories are used.

SUMMARIZING STUDENT PERFORMANCE EXAMPLE

The summary score should be based on a minimum of three paragraphs. The checklist provides room for more observations.

4 The student's paragraphs contained: (a) a topic sentence which limited the topic and voiced an attitude, opinion, or angle; (b) at least four additional sentences which supported the main idea; and, (c) no unrelated sentences or ideas.

3 The student's paragraphs contained (a) a topic sentence and (b) at least four additional sentences. The topic sentence typically lacked an attitude, angle, or opinion or one or more sentences did not clearly relate or contribute.

2 The student's paragraphs contained (a) a topic sentence and (b) at least four additional sentences. Typically, the topic sentence lacked an angle, attitude, or opinion and one or more sentences did not clearly relate or contribute

1 The student's paragraph lacked a topic sentence and contained unrelated sentences.

Using this model, assessment procedures for the Language Arts learner objectives have been developed by a team from the Testing and Language Arts Services of the Virginia Department of Education. As the procedures are intended for the use of teachers, the team has relied heavily on their comments in developing the procedures. The development process began in March of 1983 when teachers met with Department of Education personnel and language arts and measurement consultants to begin drafting the procedures. Additional, preliminary drafts were prepared by teachers in several subsequent workshops. Most drafts have been edited and many have been field tested.

TESTING THE TEST

Regardless of the good intentions and careful planning involved in creating the assessment procedures, their true value cannot be known until they are tried in actual classroom settings. Consistent with the approach taken in developing the assessment procedures, each aspect of the program will be introduced into the schools only after careful and thorough field testing.

The specific purpose of the field test carried out during the winter and spring of 1984 was to discover any aspect of the program which needed to be revised prior to the time the program is introduced into school divisions on a large scale basis. During the initial stages of the tryout process, information was collected on both the program design as a whole and on specific assessment procedure content. The emphasis was on determining the usefulness of the materials for instructional purposes. Each group of participating teachers concentrated on a small cluster of related objectives at one time. Discussions with the teachers, analysis of student responses to the tasks, and, in some cases, staff observations were used to judge the quality and usefulness of each assessment procedure for each objective. Also investigated were teacher opinions regarding the design and packaging of the assessment sourcebooks, administration and scoring of each of the assessment procedures, and related record-keeping issues.

IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAM

Language Arts SOLs are quite different from other prepared assessment materials, and it is important that teachers and administrators have realistic expectations about what is required in using them. All involved need to understand that the Language Arts SOLs are not a set of prepared tests that can be administered and scored according to a simple answer key. As they are integrated with the instructional process and often involve complex student performances, considerable effort is required in learning to use them and in fitting them into one's instructional program. The great majority of those involved in developing the assessment procedures and in field testing them believe that this learning effort is worthwhile, but many are rightly concerned that becoming familiar with them may require more time than many teachers have readily available. For this reason, we who have been coordinating the development process believe that it is reasonable to allow teachers to integrate the assessment procedures into their classes at their own paces, taking perhaps two years to fully implement the program if necessary. A high school English teacher, for example, might find that he or she could comfortably work in the LA SOLs in writing and oral language during 1984-85, but might believe that also incorporating the procedures developed for assessing the literature and reading objectives would be too much of a load for one year. Our hope is that a means will be found to accommodate such perceptions, in order that teachers will have every opportunity to realize that the assessment sourcebooks have truly been developed for their use.

Don Sale is Supervisor of Test Utilization in the Virginia Department of Education. Shelley Loving and Anne Rogers are Staff Associates there.

Congratulations to our companion organization, VSRA, for achieving a membership of 6500 this year. Several VSRA members are also VATE members. We hope more teachers will join both groups.

Great English Teaching Ideas: Evaluation and Oral Communication

Edited by SHARON HARRIS

When I began teaching English fourteen years ago, I couldn't wait to get started. The enthusiasm I had for teaching the subject that I loved was surpassed only by my desire to open the minds and hearts of students to the challenge and enjoyment of reading and working with written and oral language. Realizing that teachers make all the difference in the success of students and their enjoyment of learning, I tried many approaches and techniques. Some of them worked as planned while others bombed, but one of the most difficult tasks I faced was how to evaluate student work. Evaluation was more than just a final grade. It took place in the classroom in many ways.

The skills we teach in English classes are not always easy to categorize or to make into simple multiple choice, true-false tests. What about writing and oral communication? As I received teachers' ideas on evaluation for this column, I was impressed with the creative approaches that they used with students. Evaluation became more of a learning process rather than just a final grade.

The other focus of the column is oral communication. Many English teachers are not trained in teaching oral communication skills, so too often our only attempt in the English classroom is through oral book reports. This is a great loss for students who will be required to speak in front of large or small groups in a variety of formal and informal situations for the rest of their lives. Speaking in front of people is never easy, even for most adults, so helping students gain "speaking confidence" is important.

There are simple ways to ease the student trauma of being in the front of the class. First, when students speak to the class, they should have a lectern available for notes or as something to make them seem less alone and vulnerable. If you don't have one in your room, get a music stand from the band room. It serves the purpose beautifully. Second, review and demonstrate for students simple common sense rules like: no gum (makes speaking difficult); if you don't know what to do with your hands, place them on the lectern (helps hide the shaking); no playing with hair, jewelry, pencils, etc. (draws attention away from what you're saying); speak loudly enough for everyone to hear; look at the audience occasionally (so you'll know we're listening); and, don't sway or jiggle (makes the audience seasick). This review can be entertaining as you demonstrate the possible downfalls of a speaker, and by all means add your own pet peeves or things that you've seen students do. The teaching of oral communication should be fun.

The ideas presented in this column are just a few of the many ways that evaluation and speaking skills can be easily integrated into other class activities.

* * *

• *Evaluation of Outside Reading Assignments*

For a long time I have had a problem with keeping students on task with outside reading assignments. They forget, put other homework first, simply let the reading slide. Because I am an avid believer in improvising and recycling, I use scrap paper and other materials to make very simple, but colorful bookmarks. These I pass out when the class begins a new reading assignment. I discuss the reading task with the students and set up a reading schedule (the dates and the number of pages to be read), which the students write on their individual bookmarks. About once a week during the assignment period I pass out slips of colorful paper and ask the students to write a brief report of their reading progress.

While this technique has not been a total solution to the outside reading problem, I am able to monitor more successfully the reading task. In addition, the bookmark has an added benefit: It helps prevent useless damage to books.

Bert Carr
Phoebus High School, Hampton

* * *

• *Evaluation: Teaching Students to Evaluate Writing Quality*

The Plain English Game demonstrates to students that clear writing depends on careful wording and direct sentences.

Directions: Students need a passage of at least 100 words from a published document, such as a policy manual, a college catalog, an insurance policy. Each student picks a passage that s/he thinks needs rewriting to be clearer. Students write out the passage in their own handwriting; then they rewrite the passage, with their improvements, on a separate sheet. One passage is labeled "Passage A" and the other "Passage B." The student's name is placed on both passages, but there is no indication which is the original version.

During class the students trade the pair of passages with at least three classmates; for each pair a student receives, s/he tells which one is considered clearer and explains why by writing judgments on a separate sheet. When a student receives the pair of passages with the selections and explanations made by classmates, s/he summarizes the results, explains changes made to the original, and labels both the original and revision. Everything written is turned in.

Scoring: Full credit for revisions judged clearer by a majority of classmates and the teacher; otherwise partial credit.

Eric P. Hibbison
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College

* * *

• *Evaluation of a Medieval Literature Unit*

Food has been used as a vehicle to foster friendships, plan intrigue, and mark ceremonial events. Why not use it to cement knowledge in your English

class? A medieval banquet is an ideal culmination for a unit on medieval literature, Arthurian lore, or a novel set in the middle ages.

If you have a grand banquet, students will be called upon to perform certain parts. For example, the *Surveyor of Ceremonies* is the feast hall's banquet master, welcoming guests with the hearty words, "Wassail, Wassail, leavu freond!", singing a song of welcome, and presenting the salt to the guests at the high table. There is also the *Pantler* who cuts the bread and the *Laverer* who helps guests wash their hands with spiced and herbed water. The guests are all in appropriate costume and the banquet hall is hung with banners and decorations created by the students. Entertainment is provided by a musician(s) and a short play such as *Saint George and the Dragon.*

With the teacher as a facilitator, the students plan, cook, decorate, and perform as an integral part of the unit. Two books are invaluable resources for a banquet. Madeline Cosman's *Medieval Holidays and Festivals: A Calendar of Celebration* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1981) explains how to celebrate in medieval fashion, gives specific suggestions for each month of the year, and provides recipes for delicious concoctions. *Kings, Queens, Knights and Jesters: Making Medieval Costumes* by Lynn Edelman Schnurnberger (Harper and Row, 1978) is a source for instruction and ideas for the simple construction of costumes.

If you are looking for a tasty, fun way to help students understand the culture, people and literature of the middle ages, try a banquet!

Mallory Loehr
Albemarle County

* * *

• *Oral Communication: "The Diary of Anne Frank"*

My eighth grade English students cringe at the mere mention of public speaking and oral communications units. I therefore decided to sneak oral communication into our study of "The Diary of Anne Frank." Most of my students were excited about starting the play, but knew little or nothing about the time period of the play—the 1940s. Because they enjoy special projects, I listed topics involving the 1940-1949 time period: World War II, Adolph Hitler, Concentration Camps, Holland, and Music, Fashion, and Fiction of the 1940s. There was also the choice of performing a selected scene from the play.

Students were given project descriptions, evaluation procedures, and directions for each of the three research days. For three days the students worked in the library or classroom. Usually some form of progress/work had to be shown to me at the end of each session. After the research was completed, the projects were presented orally to the class. The selected scene was performed after we read it in class. For the presentations, one boy modeled his grandfather's Navy uniform as he explained the Navy's role in World War II. Another student played her grandmother's records. The most touching project was done by a boy who passed out copies of poetry written by children in concentration camps. He led an interesting discussion lasting most of the period.

The unit was a success because the students were so involved with telling what they had learned, they forgot that they were "communicating orally!"

Elizabeth W. Jordan
Walton Middle School, Albemarle County

* * *

• *Oral Communication: Readers Theatre*

When I was a child, every summer was filled with plays and circuses we produced for neighborhood children and mothers. Some of our best plays were adaptations of familiar stories we all knew. Readers Theatre puts structure to this natural desire to perform and places it in the classroom. It is a way of involving students in the *interpretive oral* reading of literature. However, Readers Theatre is not as time consuming as a play. There are no elaborate sets or costumes and action on the stage is minimal.

How is it done? After the teacher has introduced Readers Theatre, an interesting story or poem which tells a story is chosen and an adapted script is written by the students. Reading aloud from these scripts, the students project their characer's personality and the mood of the story through their voices. As the students and teacher become more proficient, whole programs can be developed around Readers Theatre. When all is done, reading (the story), writing (the script), speaking (interpretive oral reading) and listening (to each other as an audience) have been productively combined. A detailed description can be found in Shirlie Sloyer's *Readers Theatre: Story Dramatization in the Classroom* which is available from the National Council of Teachers of English.

Mallory Loehr
Albemarle County

Manuscripts of 100-150 words suitable for the Great English Teaching Ideas column should be sent to Sharon Harris, Albemarle County Schools, 401 McIntire Rd., Charlottesville, VA 22901

Announcements about affiliate accomplishments and other items of professional interest should be submitted to the new editors of THE NEEDLE'S EYE:

BETH BOONE AND BILLIE BELL
English Department
Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284

Oral Communication: Is Your Classroom Too Quiet?

STEVEN H. FAIRCHILD
BARBARA PERRY-SHELDON

If oral language is to develop into a tool of effective communication conversation, discussion, and other speaking activities are necessary. Some teachers question, however, an oral emphasis because they often view children as too talkative. Moffett and Wagner, in *Student-Centered Language Arts and Reading,* K-13 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1976), suggest that "school should be a place where children talk at least as much as outside, for fostering speech is the business of the language classroom. Too often there is the hidden inscription above the door that says, 'Abandon all speech ye who enter here'" (p. 31). If speech and other oral language skills are ignored in the classroom, teachers are missing the foundation for helping children develop effective communication. By implication, children may conclude that these lifetime oral skills are not really important.

Defined as a triad of a sender, a receiver, and a message, communication represents a social interaction system that develops as children interact with parents, teachers, peers, and objects in their environments. Cognitive psychologists define the interaction as processes of assimilation and accommodation whereby the child adopts new perceptions or changes current perceptions based on daily interactions. It is through these two ongoing processes that a child constructs knowledge and develops language and communication skills.

Although language does not generally have to be taught, its development cannot be ignored. Teachers must support children's language play and growth in understanding the adult symbol system by supplying words for the ideas children are constructing and by providing a variety of language activities through which children can represent their constructions. Because spontaneous language occurs in social play, children should be free to experiment socially with their environment. A wide variety of materials should be available and easily accessible for exploratory and dramatic play. Opportunities which cause children of all ages to use language as a conceptual tool must be provided through content within their developmental levels.

Oral language activities in the classroom allow children to practice speech skills, such as pronunciation, enunciation, fluency, and expression. They build confidence and poise. They allow children to extend their vocabularies and provide comprehension practice. All of the skills can then be built upon in listening, reading, and writing activities.

If your classroom is too quiet or the language is not constructive, there are language activities which can help you. The following chart of oral language activities summarizes the various forms that teachers may use with children. Through exposure to a rich language environment, children will be able to develop and enhance their language usage. Versions of the activities can be adapted for all grade levels.

ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Activity	*Definition*	*Values*
Children's Theater	strictly prearranged, story reproduction through memorized script, assigned roles, staging with props	develops appreciation of an art form; enhances expressive language abilities; explores literature for formal reproduction and presentation
Choral Speaking line-o-child refrain antiphonal or responsive part cumulative unison	the interpretation of poetry or poetic prose by few or many voices speaking as one	children serve as oral model for others; improves general skill; strengthens oral reading; helps louder child work within a group; offers shy child chance to build confidence; offers the literature of poetry
Conversation & Discussion task talks giving directions projects games brainstorming topic talks show and tell small group discussion panel discussion monologues	talking (in)formally with an individual or group	encourages children to share ideas and opinions and ask questions; helps develop language skills in an unthreatening way; practices voice quality, rhythm, rate, and volume; encourages listening and expression in response to others
Creative Dramatics pantomime free improvisation story improvisation	all forms of improvised drama—drama created by the children themselves and played spontaneously, may include dialogue	encourages participants to make choices, show initiative, and verbally express inner thoughts and feelings; allows for individuality and uniqueness in every child; develops nonverbal language skills
Dramatic Play	spontaneous play in which children represent experiences	improves social skills; allows and encourages children to use language freely; helps children communicate their ideas to others; helps children master and understand their feelings; develops creativity; develops intellectual growth
Fingerplays	short stories or rhymes that are easily dramatized by fingers, hands, and bodies	helps children relate experiences and get involved in discussions; develops small muscle coordination and eye-hand coordination; helps children gain confidence and poise; increases vocabulary; makes children aware of rhyming words, increases linguistic competence and language acquisition; teaches concepts; reinforces ex-

ORAL LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

Activity	*Definition*	*Values*
		periences; increases attention span; increases auditory memory
Oral Reporting	the results of a study presented by a group or an individual with a specific purpose	helps children feel comfortable speaking in front of others; helps students plan and organize thoughts for oral presentation; helps children learn to speak clearly and convey meaning clearly
Puppetry finger hand marionette sock stick	performing with a representational character	demands cooperation; develops oral and motor coordination; expresses comprehension orally and visually; makes talking and sharing orally less threatening
Readers' Theater	oral reading by individual or group assigned to role	allows for greater expressive involvement of literature; promotes oral reading skills
Role Playing charades open-ended stories reality practice responding to newspapers cartoons films jokes guided fantasy	a form of expression where children assume roles to solve problems or re-enact situations for discussion	helps children look beyond themselves to recognize another's point of view; helps children solve problems; promotes listening and discussion
Storytelling with props chalk talks flannelboards wearing costume without props	verbal reproduction of a story	highlights dialogue and dialect; fosters creative language growth; heightens student's appreciation of literature; introduces children to books; stimulates children's imaginations; preserves cultural traditions and introduces new cultures; increases student's vocabulary; helps develop listening skills; sharpens visualization
Vocal Music chanting humming singing	melodic choral speaking	helps children feel comfortable using their voices while in a group; increases vocabulary; gives rhythm to speech; helps children express feelings comfortably

Steven Fairchild teaches in the Early Education Department at James Madison University; Barbara Perry-Sheldon is Chapter I Reading Specialist at Spotswood Elementary School in Harrisonburg.

Oral Communication and Perceived Communication

PEPPER WORTHINGTON

Have you ever wondered if what people say is what they mean or if what you hear is really what is being said? Do the spoken words manifest inner concerns or hide them? Can spoken words get in the way of truth or manifest truth? Can we be certain that we perceive what someone else perceives when we hear the same words. If we were to survey dramatists, speech writers, and orators, we might discover a shocking reality: the perception of the spoken words may be more important than the flat reality of these words.

Sometimes it is not what is said (the actual words themselves), but what is perceived (how these words are heard). An effective strategy to focus upon the difference between the spoken word and the perceived word is to create a dramatic scene in class wherein students can hear the same words, and then discuss their different perceptions of these words. Some amazing differences may develop in group discussion.

Suppose, for example, a mother and a daughter are having a conversation. Let us recreate a brief scene to differentiate between what is said (the oral communication) and what is perceived (the unspoken word).

Mother: Susan, did I not ask you to be home by midnight last night?

Susan: Yes, mother, you did. I told you Frank and I got into an argument and didn't realize it was one o'clock.

Mother: Argument or not, Susan, I must be able to trust you. Your sister never was late.

Susan: Maybe she never argued, mother.

Mother: That's not the point. If you are to be home by midnight, that does not mean one o'clock. Janet was always home a little early. She was considerate.

Susan: I know, mother. Janet was perfect.

Mother: She was on time as you can be on time. I don't want to worry about you, Susan. You could be in a wreck or freezing somewhere. How do I know when you don't call or get back when you say you will? How do I know what to believe when you tell me one thing and do another? Don't you see how important it is to be home by midnight as you agreed?

Susan: I'm not Janet, mother. I sometimes forget what time it is. (Susan leaves the kitchen, climbs the stairs, slams her bedroom door).

What do we hear said in this scene and what do we perceive? Perhaps this conversation has identical words remembered in the mother's mind and in Susan's mind. But surely the perception of these same words changes from mother to daughter. Get the students to differentiate between the two minds, revealing in a dramatic discussion how the mother said one thing, while the daughter said and heard another. Their words were the same; their perceptions were radically different.

Probably—and again the strategy of differentiating between the spoken word and the perceived word is a guess, oftentimes a psychological

one—the mother hears her own words as a form of discipline, as a reminder to her daughter of responsibility, reliability, and caution. The mother wishes to communicate the importance of fulfilling an agreement so that the waiting party will be considered as much as the individual who has left. The daughter, on the other hand, hears her mother compare her, and unfavorably also, to her sister Janet. The daughter also hears her mother ignoring her reason for her lateness, namely, an argument. Susan may hear how her mother does not appreciate her, does not trust her, does not consider her individual situation. Susan may feel in the end that she can never please her mother, so why bother?

Another effective strategy to differentiate between oral communication and perceived communication is to focus upon the *way* words are used so that perceptions are what the speaker wishes them to be. It is not just *what* is said which influences perceptions; it is more important perhaps *how* these words are spoken. Two dramatic scenes may be created to illustrate this point.

First, a father communicates angrily to his son. Notice *the way* the words are spoken.

Father (angrily): SON! Why don't you get out and get a job so you can buy your own car? (hotly) Why ask me for a car? (fiercely) Isn't it time for you to make your own decisions?

Son: YOU'RE RIGHT! RIGHT! RIGHT!

Father: (fiercely) When have you decided it is time for YOU TO PAY YOUR OWN WAY? (shouts) ARE YOU GOING TO SIT HERE ALL YOUR LIFE?

Son: (shouts) NO! NOT ALL MY LIFE! (hotly) BUT RIGHT NOW YES.

Now take the same words and say them in a different way. As a strategy, get the class to discuss the difference between *what is said* and *the way the words* are spoken. Perhaps inquire which is more important—the spoken word or the manner of speech?

Father: (softly) Son. Why don't you get out and get a job so you can buy your own car? (gently) Why ask me for a car? (Suggestively in a soft, coaxing manner) Isn't it time for you to make your own decisions?

Son: (reflectively) You're right. (Slowly) Right. (Softly) Right.

Father: (softly suggestive) When have you decided it is time for you to pay your own way? (curious in a teasing way) Are you (rolling his hand through his son's hair) going to sit here all your life?

Son: (laughingly) No. Not all my life. (Youthfully, softly, hesitatingly) But right now, yes.

After students have discussed the two dramatic scenes, have them create a scene themselves. Give them a choice in writing a scene. Have some students create a scene which differentiates between *what is said* from *what is perceived*. Have other students create a scene which differentiates between *what is spoken* from *the way it is spoken*. Then allow these scenes to be acted before the class and discussed openly. Students

will discover a frightening but necessary reality: the perception of the spoken words may be more important than the flat literal reality of these words.

Pepper Worthington teaches at Mount Olive College in North Carolina.

The National Theater of the Performing Arts offers many cultural enrichment programs. For information, write: NTPA, 21 Charles St., Westport, CT 06880

The Spring 1985 Virginia English Bulletin will focus on what we've learned about the teaching of writing. Look for more detailed information in an upcoming *Needle's Eye* and the winter 1984 *Bulletin*.

Oral Communication: Researched Speeches

ROBERT PERRIN

FACT: *Thousands of students write researched essays each year.*
FACT: *Many of those students see this writing project as hopelessly dull.*
FACT: *Many students plagiarize large parts of their essays.*
FACT: *Many students provide incomplete citations within their essays.*
FACT: *Many students over-quote materials to pad their essays.*
FACT: *Many students paraphrase inaccurately.*
FACT: *Many students document improperly.*
FACT: *Many teachers resent the struggle of teaching research to recalcitrant students almost as much as the students resent the project.*

These are among the facts which confront teachers as they familiarize students with necessary research skills: selecting a topic, finding sources, reading, notetaking, organizing, and writing. But what can be done to make the research project more pleasant to teach and complete? To overcome at least some of the inherent problems in research work, teachers might assign a researched speech to fuse speaking and researching skills. For a project which combines the technical skills of research with oral communication skills will make the project at once familiar and new. The inclusion, too, of a live audience to respond to students' work will offer new motivation in a project which students often find difficult, unappealing, and isolated. Of course, a speech-related project will not eliminate all problems, but it will go a long way toward making research a lively activity with an interesting purpose.

Teachers need to organize the unit in much the same way they would organize a traditional unit in research. They will need to explain basic procedures for selecting a topic—emphasizing that a narrow topic is important for a focused, brief speech. Teachers will have to discuss how to use the card catalog, *Readers' Guide*, and other pertinent indexes so that students will know how to find source material in the library, for both the speech and later essays. They will need to explore notetaking techniques and documentary forms, so students will be able to record facts, quotations, and paraphrases and prepare suitable bibliography entries and endnotes. And teachers will need to explain some of the organizing principles necessary to structure the information which has been gathered. These skills are necessary for preparing speeches as well as essays.

Yet having students do research to present speeches will require some additional, related, and important guidance. Rather than establishing the number of pages a researched essay will require, teachers need to establish time limits for the speeches. A five-to-seven-minute speech will allow students to incorporate a great deal of information without making the assignment too imposing. Students, too, will probably need to speak from outlines rather than written manuscripts, to encourage natural speaking rather than simple reading of the texts. (Few people even

professionals, read well from a complete manuscript, so students will benefit from the looser format of an outlined presentation.) And finally, students will need some advice on oral presentations: practice the speech thoroughly to meet time limits, rehearse before a "practice audience" of family or friends, maintain eye-contact with the audience, speak slowly and clearly, use visual aids when helpful. Teachers without special training in oral communication need not feel unprepared to give such advice. Most teachers practice principles of effective speaking every day, and can therefore speak from their own experiences. But if teachers want students to have more systematic advice, they might invite a speech teacher to class for one session to discuss basic speech-making techniques.

Here is what can be gained from this assignment. First, students acquire basic researching skills without the formidable threat of a long, researched essay. So often students are intimidated by the bulk of a research paper project that they begin their work with unnecessary fear and dread. Because a short researched speech will not be presented as the "final assignment" for a course, as longer essays often are, students will be more relaxed as they work, knowing that they are learning useful skills but are not "making or breaking" a class grade. This improved attitude can make learning research skills more pleasant for students and teaching the research unit more pleasant for teachers.

Second, students learn that research leads to a presentation for a real audience: the teacher and other students who may not be familiar with the students' chosen subjects. Students frequently forget in writing researched essays that they are people writing to other people to share ideas and information. That is, they lose their sense of stance and instead become mechanical transcribers of information. When they research a subject to present a speech, however, they seem more consistently aware that what they read and transcribe and organize must be presented to people. Quite simply, a *live* audience helps. Students are often more selective in choosing their subjects and in gathering information, for they lose the anonymity (and safety) of an essay presented only to the teacher.

Third, students learn to effectively incorporate quoted material into their presentations. Because other students in the audience are familiar with the students who are speaking—and know their language patterns well—speakers are less inclined to try to pass off someone else's words as their own; they will plagiarize less often. In a speaking situation, students seem more attuned to these shifts in diction than, unfortunately, they seem to be in writing. Perhaps it is the public nature of the speech which forces them to acknowledge others' written words, or perhaps it is because their peers are more openly critical of such lapses than are teachers. But for whatever reason, quotations are more honestly incorporated. Because a listening audience will not have the benefit of endnotes to indicate where the material has been gathered, student speakers must clearly identify at least the author of the quotation and more typically the source and publication date as well. It is important that listeners receive clear information in order to "follow" the speech,

and this skill, learned through oral presentation, can be applied in later written work where it is equally important.

Fourth, students learn that paraphrasing information is essential because they will not want to clutter their speeches with long quotations which are sometimes difficult to read aloud. Instead, students will usually see that pertinent facts and ideas are more useful. Again, working for an audience which will react "in person" to the reading of too many quotations, students are more apt to look for important ideas to share rather than drone through excessively quoted material and risk losing an audience's interest.

Fifth, because students are working from an outline to present speeches, placing note numbers will not be as difficult. In their outlines, facts and figures will clearly stand out, and quotations will be even more obviously separated from their own work. Consequently, they will learn to place note numbers more easily than is sometimes possible in a written text.

Sixth, students can master endnote and bibliography forms in isolation. They will not be struggling with their written presentation of researched materials and can therefore concentrate on the mechanics of preparing documentary pages—to be turned in to the teacher when the speech is presented. Because these documentary pages are isolated, teachers can identify students' errors or inconsistencies well before they influence the grade of a major essay.

Seventh, students will begin to see research as a way of gathering information to share with others. It will no longer be an activity which only leads to the writing of a long essay. Eliminating this misconception (research = writing) will expand students' perspectives of what work in research really involves, and that change in perception can improve their attitudes in the classroom.

Of course, preparing researched speeches will not solve all problems. Some students will still resent research, no matter what kind of presentation it leads to. Some students will still plagiarize, still provide incomplete citations, still over-quote sources, and still paraphrase inaccurately. And some will still document improperly. But most students will see research in a new way, and that change in perception can positively alter the tone of the class. Teachers, too, can emphasize researching skills while at the same time helping students learn about varying ways to present gathered information to people in an interesting manner. If we make researched speeches a part of our students' training, perhaps we will even be able to create some new "facts" about research:

FACT: *Research is not limited to writing.*
FACT: *Researching skills can be learned in conjunction with other important communication skills.*
FACT: *Research can be presented to students as well as teachers.*
FACT: *Students and teachers need not dread research.*

Robert Perrin teaches in the English Department at Indiana State University, Terre Haute.

Review

Ruth Cline and William McBride, *A Guide To Literature for Young Adults*. Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983. Reviewed by Mark Gulesian.

The authors state in the preface that their book is not intended as an in-depth study of literature for young adults, and indeed it is not. It is, however, a very acceptable *hors d'oeuvre* for readers interested in quickly pursuing any issues related to books about and for adolescents. Teachers, librarians, school administrators, social workers and parents will find this book a useful guide to the books young people have read in the past, read presently, and in all likelihood, given the nature of adolescents, will read in the future. This is a book for people who want to know the time, and are not necessarily interested in finding out how clocks are made.

Ruth Cline and William McBride define literature for Young Adults as "books written especially for adolescents and books which, while not written especially for them, are available for their use." That covers a lot of ground, from *Wind in the Willows* to *Watership Down*, and from Alcott to Asimov. In two hundred attractive paperback pages there isn't much opportunity for depth, but the breadth is there and the reader can and should pursue matters in more detail by other means.

The first three chapters deal with the phenomenon our culture has created called "adolescence," with a brief history of literature for adolescents, including recent books organized around seven representative protagonists from recent literature. Part two explores selecting literature, including a chapter on censorship. While this section of the book won't be adequate for librarians, it probably will be for teachers, and everyone would sleep better at night if school administrators read this information.

The authors' longest section addresses ways in which literature for young adults can be used in the classroom: organizing teaching units; the history, uses and misuses of the comic strip (to which the authors devote twenty pages, one tenth of their entire book for some unaccountable reason); the teaching of myth, legends and folklore; a chapter on the impact of television on reading and the classroom; and a short but interesting chapter on literature that reflects other disciplines. One wonders how the world might be different if history teachers knew about Robert Newton Peck and were willing to make use of his historical books for adolescents.

A Guide to Literature for Young Adults serves its purpose. For those who have a passing interest in the books adolescents read, and why they read them, it will suffice, and might even whet the appetite for further study. For those who deal with books and young adults in extensive ways, *A Guide* is a good place to start.

Mark Gulesian, a former member of the Bulletin*'s Editorial Board, teaches at the College of William and Mary.*

ERIC/RCS Report: Visual Literacy Comes of Age

HILARY TAYLOR HOLBROOK

> *Something there is in our intellectual culture that doesn't like a picture.*
>
> CALVIN SKAGGS

"Back to basics" advocates who dismiss visual media courses as frivolous would not view kindly the idea that literacy in the visual media of television, film, and advertising is no less important to a solid education than are reading and writing. But even critics of curricula not grounded solely in the classic works of literature or the fundamentals of grammar and composition must acknowledge that the visual media, so pervasive in society as to be inescapable, are an influential force that shapes perceptions of reality, history, and society. In the face of such influence it would seem prudent to rethink curricula in terms of an appropriately broader literacy. Within this broader literacy, students should be made aware of the scope and power of these media, and learn to be discriminating consumers if they are not to be manipulated or deceived [Wagschal, ED 239 833; Gnizak and Girshman, CS 007 238].

Although the "basics" trend is an effort to abate verbal illiteracy, verbal and visual literacy are, to a high degree, inseparable. According to Skaggs, "One cannot increase visual literacy without enriching verbal literacy. It may also be argued that we can no longer achieve verbal literacy among our youth without attempting systematically to achieve a higher level of visual literacy."

English appears to be the discipline best equipped to impart visual literacy. Its primary concern has been transmission of general culture, of which the visual media are a major vehicle. It is also primarily responsible for teaching skills of critical analysis—elements of theme, plot, character, and style that are present in a sitcom, movie, or advertisement, as much as in a novel. This paper presents a case for visual literacy in the English curriculum, supported by materials from the ERIC system, and looks at activities and methods for developing such literacy.

TELEVISION: WASTELAND OR FRONTIER? Foster observes that students have three choices regarding television viewing: don't watch it at all, watch all they want, or watch it moderately with critical understanding and appreciation. With compelling arguments he dismisses the first two as unrealistic and dangerous, respectively. Among the mind boggling statistics he cites are the 95 percent (74 million) of households with television sets, more than have refrigerators, stoves, or indoor plumbing. He also notes television's effect on behavior, value systems, and perceptions of reality, effects that are immediate and dramatic, or subtle and cumulative over a lifetime. That leaves choice three.

One of television's least obvious advantages, according to Levinson [CS 504 288] is that the ability to discern television's strengths and weaknesses *is* teachable. Furthermore, this skill is self-perpetuating with every new program or commercial.

Among the discussion questions suggested by Harold Foster are the following:

—Does television create violence in our society or does it reflect the violence already present?

—Does television news accurately reflect the world?

—Can too much viewing harm an individual?

Foster also proposes exploring television myths such as the detective show (might makes right), the western (good and evil were more discernable in the "old days"), or the sociology of sport.

FILM—LARGER THAN LIFE. Presumably because "movies are for entertainment" (Where does that leave literature?), film studies have been a conspicuous target for curriculum critics; but like it or not, the movies are here to stay. The demise of the neighborhood theatre at the hands of cable television and the economy notwithstanding, it is the personal isolation and "larger than life" quality of the big screen experience that lend films their attraction and their persuasive qualities. Gnizak and Girshman [CS 007 238] describe a film curriculum designed for grades nine and ten that uses both English teachers and media specialists. The course challenges the notion that when one watches a movie one does not have to think. Students complete composition, reading comprehension, and drama/poetry exercises, as well as develop a script that they subsequently film.

Another way to use film study as a stimulus rather than an end in itself is to focus on literary works that have been made into movies, examining which of the two the students find better (students may be surprised to discover that very often the book is better than the film), how the two differed, and how having first seen the movie influenced the way they read the story and vice versa.

Foster also suggests that awareness of the structural elements of film—editing, movement, composition, camera angle, color, lighting, and sound as they are used to manipulate emotional response—is a significant factor in visual literacy.

ADVERTISING: THE HARDEST SELL. To serve as an example of the overwhelming influence that advertising exerts on social patterns, Ewen [ED 137 804] cites advertising as the tool with which manufacturing and industry have altered the character of daily living from productive to consumptive. Pressure from consumer advertising during the 1950s and 1960s created the "feminine ideal" of the housewife who remained at home, preparing prepackaged meals in a kitchen filled with state-of-the-art appliances and using all the newest health and beauty products to maintain youth and beauty for her husband. Such advertising has also been indicted as a catalyst for the national obsession with being thin.

Studies by Moore and others [ED 219 753; ED 165 182] on the effects of advertising and media consumer behavior on adolescents indicate that susceptibility to the persuasion of advertising is positively related to the amount of mass media use and the amount of communication with family and friends about matters of consumption (the higher the media use and the more discussion, the lower the susceptibility), and negatively correlated to age and socioeconomic status (the younger the consumer and the lower the socioeconomic status, the higher the susceptibility). The researchers also found that *retention* of advertising information was positively related to age, amount of communication with family and friends about consumerism, and socioeconomic status.

Bennett [ED 159 728] brings attention to two forms of advertising other than product advertising that warrant study: corporate-sponsored image and ideology advertising (the propagation of ideas and controversial social issues in a manner that supports the interests of the sponsor while downgrading the sponsor's opponents, such as power company interests in nuclear power.)

To counter the effects of various kinds of advertising, teachers have developed a variety of effective classroom practices.

Braden and Walker [ED 212 294] refer to advertising as a most effective symbiotic use of words and visuals. "Trademarks and corporate logos have

become part of our visual vocabulary. The pages of almost any slick magazine will reveal visual-verbal combinations that turn the verbal metaphor into a visualized attention getter."

The persuasive language used in such advertising can be an excellent tool for teaching rheotoric, according to Stone [ED 166 701]. Since advertising demonstrates creative and admirable as well as corrupted uses of the English language, it can serve as the core of a composition unit, to teach students variety in diction, connotations, sentence structure, openings, use of detail, economy of expression, the sound of language, awareness of the reinforcement that words and pictures give each other, and persuasion through indirection. (Why is "No brand cleans better than Brand X" not the same as "Brand X cleans better than any other brand"?)

Vertin [ED 190 424] describes an individualized unit for study in advertising, developed for the junior high level. The teacher's guide and student booklet are designed to teach students to identify the different sources and types of advertisements, to recognize the main purposes of advertisements, and to analyze the purchasing powers behind the basic advertisement.

A section of Webb's paper on consumer education activities [ED 214 847] examines common advertising gimmicks, and provides related activities for secondary students, including finding examples of advertising ploys such as "weasel words," the "scientific claim," or "superstar endorsement."

Finally, a junior and senior high school media literacy curriculum guide [Bhakuni, et al., ED 211 973], written by participants in a summer workshop on media literacy, focuses primarily on manipulation in advertising. The four advertising lessons cover (1) advertising as manipulation, (2) the power of television commercials, (3) propaganda techniques used in media advertising, and (4) how advertisements persuade through words. The guide also lists goals for media literacy, includes a television viewing questionnaire, and outlines several media projects.

A VISUAL CURRICULUM. Clearly, the need for media literacy exists, as do the materials for incorporating such instruction into the English curriculum without sacrificing more "fundamental" components. Burbank and Pett survey eight successful visual literacy programs from the United States, Canada, England, and Australia. The experience of one such program indicated that visual literacy is within the financial capabilities of school systems and, if properly carried out, will be suported locally. In many instances, small pilot efforts in one classroom or one school have grown into major projects involving teachers throughout the school system. The ERIC system contains other curriculum meterials dealing with television, advertising, and film study, which can be found by using the thesaurus descriptors VISUAL LITERACY, ADVERTISING, FILM STUDY, and TELEVISION.

If the "basics" are those minimal skills necessary to function as an adult in society, then it follows that the ability to interpret information intelligently in a society that is becoming increasing visual is not only basic, but also essential.

References

Abstracts of materials selected for dissemination by ERIC are published monthly in Resources In Education (RIE). The materials are identified by ED numbers and are available in either microfiche or paper form from libraries or the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P. O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210. Documents identified by CS numbers will be announced in forthcoming issues of RIE.

Bennett, James R. "How to Defend Ourselves Against Corporate Image and Ideology Advertising." 11 pp. [ED 159 728]

Bhakuni, Rosa, and others. "Media Literacy Curriculum Guide, Grades 7-12." 49 pp. [ED 211 973]

Braden, Roberts A., and Alice D. Walker. "Reigning Catachreses and Dogmas Related to Visual Literacy." 19 pp. [ED 212 294]

Burbank, Lucille, and Dennis W. Pett. "Eight Dimensions of Visual Literacy." Instructional Innovator 28 (January 1983): 25-27. [EJ 274 773]

Ewen, Stuart. Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. 251 pp. [ED 137 804]

Foster, Harold M. "Teaching Television Literacy." English Journal 70 (December 1981): 70-72. [EJ 256 238]

Gnizak, Eleanor, and Rita Girshman. "Integration of the Image and the Word." Blacksburg, Virg.: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Seeing Ourselves: Visualization in a Social Context, pp. 291-96. 1983. [CS 007 238]

Levinson, Paul. "The Benefits of Watching Television." 12 pp. [CS 504 288]

Moore, Roy L., and George P. Moschis. "A Longitudinal Analysis of Television Advertising Effects on Adolescents." 32 pp. [ED 219 753]

Moore, Roy L.; George P. Moschis; and Lowndes F. Stephens. "Mass Media Influence on Adolescent Consumer Behavior." 23 pp. [ED 165 182]

Skaggs, Calvin. "Warning: Visual Illiteracy May Be Hazardous to Your Health." ADE Bulletin 70 (Winter 1981): 17-21. [EJ 257 727]

Stone, William B. "Advertising and Student Rhetoric." 13 pp. [ED 166 701]

Vertin, Cindy. "Advertisements: There's A Lot More than Meets the Eye. Teacher's Guide and Student Material." Topeka, Kans: Kansas State Department of Education, 1978. 38 pp. [ED 190 424]

Wagschal, Harry. "Redefining Literacy for the 21st Century." 13 pp. [ED 214 833]

Webb, Farren. "Teaching Consumer Skills and How to Survive in America." Colorado: Denver University Center for Teaching International Relations. 1980. 160 pp. [ED 214 847]

ERIC/RCS is a federally funded Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills, sponsored by NCTE. For further information about ERIC as a research resource, write User Services, ERIC/RCS, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

Resolutions Passed at the 1983 NCTE Convention

RESOLUTION 1

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English through its publications and professional meetings explore the effective use of computers in the teaching of English and language arts;

that NCTE urge equity of access to computers among students of varying socio-economic levels and among various departments within a school; and

that NCTE provide leadership in defining legitimate uses of the computer by encouraging research and by disseminating information about the role of computers in the English language arts curriculum.

RESOLUTION 2

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English affirm the position that students should write frequently in every course as a way of learning the subject matter and of sharpening their writing skills; and

that NCTE seek ways to provide assistance to teachers of other subject matter disciplines in their efforts to improve students' writing skills in all subject matter fields.

RESOLUTION 3

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English establish a task force to summarize existing research on the relationship of workload to teaching and learning; and

that this task force propose additional research if needed.

RESOLUTION 4

RESOLVED, that the National Council of Teachers of English discourage a narrow pedagogy which focuses on specific language skills, and remind its many constituencies that, while language proficiency is essential, we must continue to emphasize the importance of the full, humane discipline of English including the aesthetic, affective and the cultural aspects of written and oral expression as well as literature and the theater.

The Committee Visits

"O great merit-pay-god,
Forgive me for not being a master teacher.
And bless my friend who is.
She daily delivers to the class her neatly transcribed notes
In loquacious language which
Have been duly noted in precise terms in
Her plan book.
And the class willingly writes the notes
In their notebooks in precise terms also.
And every Thursday she gives a test
For which the class studies
And her bell-shaped curve looks lovely—
The very next day.
And her papers and book are always
Arranged in orderly fashion on her desk.
And her files also reflect careful attention to detail,
As does her room. O god, she is neat!
And she always signs in and out at the prescribed moment,
And all of these outstanding features were
Duly noted also when you sent your great Committee,
O great merit-pay-god, down
To visit.
But when the great Committee visited me, O god!
I was not in my classroom on time. . !
(I had stopped to talk with a student who was crying in the hall.)
I did not have my notes that day. . !
(I had told them they could discuss nuclear holocaust; they asked.)
I did not ask them to write anything in their notebooks. . !
(John forgot his; Susan loaned hers to Beth, etc., etc.)
I had not graded their papers on 'What is a cabbage?'. . !
(I had gone to the symphony the night before.)
I had not straightened the papers and books on my desk. . !
(I take anything they write and still plan to read the excerpts from *Time*.)
And I didn't really know when we'd have that test on participles. . .
And I needed to find that article on Kennedy and Frost. . .
And I had to leave as soon as the bell rang to meet with the newspaper staff. . .
After school. I'm sorry. O great merit-pay-god.
Can you understand? There was so little time to. . .
Tidy up, chat about my gradebook, or paraphrase Piaget,
You caught me on a busy day.
But I'm sure my friend provided great insight for you; she has mastered teaching.
But I'm still only a teacher. Maybe next time, if there's time. . .
Forgive me."

The author, Marsha Owens Hubbard, is a 9th grade English teacher at Stonewall Jackson Junior High School, Hanover County.

Analyzing and Evaluating Argument

SIMONE POIRIER-BURES

Many students have difficulty evaluating persuasive writing. They tend to agree or disagree with the author, but have difficulty judging whether the arguments are good or bad. I have found the following exercise very effective in guiding students to a critical response.

Before you can effectively evaluate an argument, you must have a clear understanding of its component parts. In other words, *analysis* must precede *evaluation.*

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

A. Subject Matter:

—What is the issue?

—How is the issue defined by the writer?

—What is the writer's position?

—Does the writer provide background information on the issue?

—Does the writer present views opposed to his/her own and rebut them, or does the writer simply advance a position without considering opposing views?

—Observe the steps that the writer uses to take the reader to his/her final conclusion. Make a brief outline of these minor conclusions, noting all supporting points (sometimes called evidence, or premises).

—Examine these supporting points carefully to determine what kind they are: Are they facts (subject to verification)? Opinions? (If so, whose?) Are authorities cited?

—Are the conclusions drawn from induction? Deduction? Neither?

B. Treatment

—Does the writer assume that the reader feels a certain way about the subject?

—Does the writer use a particular style (i.e., humor, irony, sarcasm, persona) to advance his argument?

—What kind of diction does the writer use? Is it largely abstract? Concrete? Arekey words defined? Is the language largely denotative or connotative?

—Is the writer appealing primarily to the reader's intellect or emotions? How do you know?

QUESTIONS FOR EVALUATION

A. Subject Matter:

—Is this an issue that is subject to reasonable argument?

—Is the issue defined adequately? Is it oversimplified? Are there points left out? Alternatives other than those presented by the writer?

—Does the writer adequately rebut the views opposed to his?

—Are all minor conclusions adequately supported by evidence? (Are the facts correct? Authorities responsible?)

—Do the conclusions follow logically?

—Are you persuaded? Why or why not?

B. Treatment:

—How important is the writer's style or persona to the argument? Does it enhance or distract? Does it disguise weak or non-existing arguments? Does it highlight sound ones?

—Does the writer use language to manipulate the reader's feelings? Is this done legitimately, in the service of sound reasoning, or does this replace sound arguments and/or disguise weak ones?

—Is the emotional appeal (if there is one) used to enhance sound arguments or disguise weak ones?

Simone Poirier-Bures is in the English Department at Virginia Tech.

NCTE TASK FORCE ON EXCELLENCE IN ENGLISH

James R. Squire, senior vice president of Ginn and Company, Lexington, Massachusetts, will head NCTE's newly established Task Force on Excellence in English. Squire, who served as executive secretary of NCTE between 1960 and 1967, said his first step will be to poll newly appointed Task Force members on their chief concerns stemming from current problems in education and from recent reports on education reform.

Others appointed to the NCTE Task Force are Rexford Brown, Education Commission of the States, Denver; Edmund J. Farrell, University of Texas at Austin; Ronald J. Goba, Hingham Public Schools, Massachusetts; Kenneth Lane, University of California at Berkeley; Susan Miller, University of Utah; and Dorothy Strickland, Teachers College, Columbia University. The Task Force will study current reports and initiatives for improving education, confer with teachers and administrators, and recommend programs and projects to support excellence in teaching and learning English.

"Strengthening American education at every instructional level is dependent on strengthening the teaching of children and young people to process language in every discipline," Squire commented. "Whether in science education, mathematics education, or literary education, it is through language that we learn to think and to feel and to respond to the ideas and values of our culture. It is essential to the future of education in this country that we improve the teaching of English at the elementary school level, no less than at the high school and college and university levels." He stressed his personal concern that reform must reach down to the earliest years of elementary education and not be confined to "adding Carnegie units in high school."

Squire cited an emerging awareness among educators in other disciplines that English is "the bedrock for learning anything else." They are realizing that "the whole problem of cognitive thinking and developing higher thought processes" depends heavily on language processing, and that "unless we can get students reading and writing science, for example, we'll never be successful at developing higher levels of science instruction."

K-6 Teaching Ideas Call

Have a successful language arts activity that you are willing to share with Kindergarten-Sixth Grade teachers? If so, your bright idea is needed for NCTE's new book, *Ideas for Teaching Language Arts in Kindergarten Through Grade Six*. Criteria for selection of activities involve appropriateness for K-6 students, consistency with sound research, integration of the language arts, and ingenuity and resourcefulness.

Don't hesitate to send your ideas immediately so that other teachers can try them before they are included in the book. Please state: (1) the title of your activity, (2) its purpose, (3) who might benefit from the activity, (4) directions to the teacher and the students, and (5) suggesions for follow-up activities if appropriate. The activity should be no longer than four double-spaced pages and may include material or an activity sheet to be depulicated for students. Skill-and-drill worksheets and fragmented exercises are to be avoided. If your activity is one that lends itself to sharing a student's in-process or completed work, please include a sample. To ensure receipt of your contribution, please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envlope. Send your name and school affiliation in order to receive credit. Send your contributions by September 1, 1984, to: Dorothy Watson, 225 Education, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO 65211.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The NCTE Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English invites educators at all levels—elementary, secondary, and college—to submit manuscripts for the 1985 Classroom Practices publication "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Improving Our Professional Status." Articles should describe in detail successful strategies for improving one's sense of self; improving student accountability in the classroom; improving relationships with administrators; improving rapport with parents; improving teachers' image in the community; improving teachers' image with legislators.

The intent of the book is to suggest strategies to improve teachers' professional status in relation to one's self-image, one's students, administrators, parents, community, and legislators at both the state and national levels. Manuscripts can range in length from two to ten pages. Two copies should be submitted with the author's name and address appearing only on a title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed before September 1, 1984, to the Committee Chair: Jeff Golub, 907 S. Plymouth, Olympia, WA 98502.

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE
October 12-14, 1984
Airport Sheraton Hotel
Roanoke, Virginia

CONFERENCE THEME

"ENGLISH TEACHING IN 1984:
LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND LEARNING"

To promote an environment where intellectual freedom thrives; to discover in all things the dignity and worth of the individual; to explore the variety of the human condition; to examine the nature of composing and its product; to develop reason through the basic understanding of language; to gaze into the future with knowledge of our past; to elevate the art of learning for learning's sake—these are the responsibilities of the English teacher in 1984. Also see box on page 13.

SEARCH FOR VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN EDITOR

VATE President Judy Self has appointed a committee to search for an editor for VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN. The editor-elect is to be appointed at the December 1984 Executive Board meeting, will serve as associate editor in 1985 and as editor for a five year term beginning in 1986. Criteria and guidelines for application will be published in the May issue of THE NEEDLE'S EYE. Prospective applicants may also write the search committee chair for information: Leon F. Williams, 5556 McVitty Road, Roanoke, VA 24018.

Third Annual Young Writers Workshop

The University of Virginia is again sponsoring a summer program for aspiring writers, grades 7-12. For information, write: Joseph Strzepek, School of Education, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.

WRITING INSTITUTES

The seven sites in the Virginia Writing Project (College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University) are once again hosting five or six week writing institutes this summer. For information, write the English Department or School of Education at the site nearest you.